

EXCISE

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Section 1: EPI



DEPARTMENT OF STATE
AGENCY MEMORANDUM

~~CONFIDENTIAL~~
~~(entire text)~~

To: the Secretary
From: DIR - George

FROM: BDR - George S. Vest

Responding to Congressional and Press
Inquiries on MIG-23s in Cuba

Congressman Donnan wrote to President Carter on November 15 expressing concern over the presence of MIG-23s in Cuba. In addition, the Department has received numerous inquiries from several Congressmen and Senators on behalf of their constituents regarding the issue. Recent questions on MIG-23s from the press have been taken at the noon briefings.

An answer to Congressman Dornan and others has been pending while we sought a full response from the Soviets on the MIGs.

B-1
A-5

Recommendation:

1. That you approve transmission to the ESC (under cover of a Tarnoff-Brzezinski transmittal form) of the draft letter to Congressman Dornan (Tab 1), and that this text be used to answer other Congressional inquiries on the subject.

Approve (remained) Disapprove _____

2. That you approve the press guidance at Tab 2.

Disapprove

Attachments:

1. Draft letter to Congressman Dornan
2. Press Guidance

Drafted: EUR/SOV:KNB
x21671:1/4/79

PA/PRESS/MASader (subs)
Clearance: EUR/SOV:WTShinn,Jr-
S/MS:CKarman
H:DBenneke (subs)
APA/CCA: (subs)
DIA/DOE: (subs)

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Dear Mr. Dornan:

President Carter has asked me to respond to your letter of November 15 in which you express concern about the Soviet Union's transfer of MIG-23 aircraft to Cuba.

Since these aircraft were first delivered to Cuba, the U.S. Government has continually studied the matter to determine the aircraft's characteristics and evaluate whether the planes represent a threat to the security of the United States. We have also carefully reviewed the 1962 Kennedy-Khrushchev understanding to determine whether there has been a violation of that understanding.

Our current assessment based on our ongoing examination is that the MIG-23 aircraft now in Cuba do not constitute an offensive threat to the United States. We consider that at present these aircraft do not represent a violation of the 1962 understanding. Furthermore, there is no indication that any of the MIG-23's now in Cuba are configured to carry nuclear weapons or that there are any nuclear weapons on Cuban soil.

The Honorable
Robert K. Dornan,
House of Representatives.

The transfer of these aircraft to Cuba is a matter of importance to the United States. As a result, we have raised this matter directly with the Soviets and have sought clarification of their intentions. They have assured us that they continue to adhere to the 1962 understanding, and that the MIG-23's are not capable of carrying nuclear weapons. The Soviets are aware of the seriousness with which we take these assurances.

While the aircraft now in Cuba are not a threat to the U.S., we will continue to keep the situation there under constant review. As President Carter stated in his news conference last November 30, we will continue to monitor Soviet compliance with the 1962 understanding very carefully to be sure that there is no offensive threat to the United States from weapons in Cuba.

Sincerely,

PRESS GUIDANCE: SOVIET MIG-23's IN CUBA

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